

Episcopal Theological School: Burnham Hall (Old Refectory) HABS No. MA-1137
99 Brattle Street
Cambridge
Middlesex County
Massachusetts

HABS
MASS,
9-CAMB,
47-

WRITTEN HISTORICAL AND DESCRIPTIVE DATA

HISTORIC AMERICAN BUILDINGS SURVEY
NATIONAL PARK SERVICE
U.S. DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR
WASHINGTON, D.C. 20240

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Episcopal Theological School: Burnham Hall
(Old Refectory)

HABS No. MA-1137

Location: 99 Brattle Street
Cambridge, Middlesex County, Massachusetts

Present Owner: Episcopal Theological School

Present Occupant: Same

Present Use: Theological school

Significance: An important element of early (for America) planned academic complex, comprising an open-ended quadrangle of three related buildings and a separate chapel. An important work of architects Ware and Van Brunt.

PART I. HISTORICAL INFORMATION

A. Physical History:

1. Date of erection: 1879
2. Architect: Ware and Van Brunt
(William Robert Ware, 1832-1915; Henry Van Brunt, 1832-1903)
3. Owners: Land acquired by Episcopal Theological School in 1868.
4. Builder: Not known.
5. Original plans and construction: Eastern wing of quadrangle designed by Ware and Van Brunt, 1871.
6. Alterations and additions:
 - 1946 Changes in rear wing, now apartments
 - 1961 General alterations, first floor and basement.
No architect given.
Contractor: John R. Clark & Associates, Inc.
Building Permit 60910

B. Historical Context:

Building was gift of John Appleton Burnham.

1. Layout, shape: The gallery joins the building at mid point of the long western side; the wing is rectangular, but the east side has excrescences and entries that make it irregular. Three stories tall in rear; one story tall for refectory (now reading room).

2. Foundations: Refectory: gray granite blocks, as Lawrence Hall; rear wing, yellow sandstone foundations.
3. Wall construction: Refectory, same as other two buildings; stone, brick, etc. Rear wing is of brick, with only limited stone trim. Gray mortar.
4. Structural system, framing: Solid masonry walls.
5. Porches: Main entrance from arcade; side porch (opposite) is modern. Extensive rebricking and reworking at corner just to north of this entrance indicates a possible old entrance. Modern entrance to cellar (concrete well) at angle of wing and main body, to northeast.
6. Chimneys: One large stack (three ribs on flat side) for fireplace in refectory corner.
7. Openings:
 - a. Doorways and doors: Three. All are modern doors.
 - b. Windows: Rectangular 6/6 sash; in refectory, however, are 15/15 leaded glass panes. Round stained glass memorial window in south wall.
8. Roof
 - a. Shape, covering: Gable roof over refectory; gray slate, with light green slates laid in hexagonal pattern in two bands near the apex. Rest of slate rectangular. Gable walls are capped with yellow sandstone. Wing: Also gabled.
 - b. Cornice: Refectory has frieze zone of light stone, then a projecting Gothic molding above, and copper gutter above that.
 - c. Dormers, towers: North wing has seven dormers, with gable roofs. Three of the dormers have a double window within an arched enframing. Hexagonal slate covering sides of this. Also, one dormer is very small, with three panes and a semi-conical roof. At southwest corner of wing, just over gallery, is a projecting brick bartizan with conical roof, corbeled out support, and one small window. Small iron finial on top. Next to main chimney is a bell tower (or cote) to the west. Red slate pyramidal roof, turned corner posts (woodwork painted cream) with elaborate scroll finial of strap iron. Both gables of refectory also have iron finials, a central rod with four side scroll brackets.

C. Description of Interior:

1. Floor plans: Refectory room is rectangular, about 27' x 45'. A hall carries on from entrance arcade through to far side (east) of building and has exit to south, and stairs down to basement to north. Just inside arcade entrance is passage back to rear apartments.
2. Stairways: Down to the basement level is very modern; those to rear apartments also recent, probably 1946.
3. Flooring: Covered, or modern.
4. Wall and ceiling finish: In refectory, 4" wainscotting with reeded vertical strips alternating with unreeded one. Plaster walls. Ceiling of refectory is supported on four pairs of free standing hammer beam trusses (the fifth on the front wall is attached). These have been painted or stained a light brown, including all the iron strapping and bolts. The space of the ceiling (the sloping roof) between trusses is covered with acoustic tiles.
5. Doorways and doors: All are modern. The opening from hall to refectory is about 4" wide.
6. Decorative features and trim: Stained glass window at end (modern) and fireplace.
7. Notable hardware: None.
8. Lighting, type of fixtures: All modern.
9. Heating: A large fireplace in the northeast corner of the refectory has a commemorative plaque in a Romanesque enframing in the chimney breast: "This hall was erected / A.D. MDCCCLXXIX / for the trustees of the / Episcopal Theological School / by / John Appleton Burnham / of Boston." This is all in caps. Over the fireplace proper is the following inscription in Gothic letters: "Oratio • mediatio • tentatio • faeiunt • theologum." The fireplace is mainly brick, with a stone lintel on brackets, and stone aedicula above; but the entire fireplace has been painted.

D. Site and Surroundings:

Orientation forms the eastern wing of the quadrangle and faces south-southwest.

PART III. SOURCES OF INFORMATION

A. Primary and unpublished sources:

Early photographs of Burnham Hall, exterior and interior. Archives, Episcopal Theological School, 99 Brattle Street, Cambridge, Mass.

Records of the Protestant Episcopal Theological School, 1867-93.
Archives, Episcopal Theological School.

B. Secondary and published sources:

American Architect and Building News, Boston, Vol. 4, No. 156, (21 December 1878), p. 206.

Description, exterior view.

Architectural Sketch Book, No. 3 (September 1873), plate 11.

Drawing of projected complex of buildings.

Cambridge Tribune, 9 April 1880

Opening of Burnham Hall. Description.

Cambridge Tribune, 22 June 1889

Drawing of quadrangle. Description of school.

Hodges, Rev. George, "The Episcopal Theological School," The Cambridge of Eighteen Hundred and Ninety Six, ed., Arthur Gilman, Cambridge, Mass., 1896, pp. 254-56.

Muller, James Arthur, The Episcopal Theological School, Cambridge, Mass., 1943, p. 62.

Rettig, Robert Bell, Guide to Cambridge Architecture, Cambridge, Mass., 1969, D58.

Taylor, Charles L., "The Story of the Episcopal Theological School," Cambridge Historical Society, Publications, Vol. 36 (Proceedings for the Years 1955, 1956), Cambridge, Mass., 1957, pp. 7-21.